

FAMILY-FRIENDLY EMPLOYMENT CONCEPTS IN ORGANISATIONS OF DIFFERENT SIZES IN HUNGARY IN 2018

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Abstract

Recently work-life balance has become a focus point for both individuals and organizations. There is an increasing number of employees believing family responsibilities and work commitments important to balance. Both employers and employees have begun to consider the problem of creating work-life balance and solution possibilities of this problem increasingly important with the presently increasing quality of life. This is an additional reason why companies regularly use family-oriented and family-friendly fringe benefits as motivational tools for their employees. The authors conducted an empirical study in 2018 seeking to answer the question how Hungarian organizations handled this issue. They have examined the miscellaneous methods used and the approaches of the topic to study how those could then help employees tackle the occurring problems themselves. The paper has circumvented this focus point from numerous perspectives. The authors have intended to examine in the current work whether similarities or differences could primarily be identified in problem solving of organisations of different sizes.

Key words: Family freindly workplace, reconciliation of family life and work

JEL Code: M10, M12

Introduction

Both employers and employees have begun to consider the problem of creating work-life balance and solution possibilities of this problem increasingly important with the presently increasing quality of life. Certain employee-groups are more sensitive in this field. For example nurses often locate their own or familiar needs behind the needs of their patients and co-workers. (Mullen, 2015)

Jensen et al. define work-family conflict (WFC) as an interrole conflict, where workers have not got enough energy or time to perform in the fields of work and family successfully. WFC has two types. In case of WIF (work interference with family) the worker cannot carry out

his/her duties at home because of overtime or work overload. Another type of WFC is FIW (family interference with work) when worker underperforms at workplace because of pressure of domestic tasks and problems (Jansen et al. 2004). So both types of Work-Family Conflicts (WIF and FIW) can affect job-stress, burnout and leaving job. Employees would like to have a shorter workweek, part time opportunities and other family-friendly practices. (Mansour-Tremblay, 2016)

These practices help employees manage and combine obligations at workplace and at home. One of the simplest methods is Worktime control (WTC). WTC is a suggested tool to reduce workers' load, fatigue and therefore also WIF (Nijp et al., 2015). Despite the mutual interest in some parts of the developed world voluntary based implementation of family-friendly policies have failed and a legal approach should be undertaken. (Chou and Cheung, 2013)

Currently, multiple family-friendly opportunities and solutions exist, which can help both parties find an optimal solution to this dilemma. Therefore, it is not surprising that studies about this topic have caught the eye of the management. Because of this, numerous analyses and surveys have been conducted, taking into account a variety of different aspects regarding how a family-friendly approach can be incorporated into workplace policies and subsequently how individual aspects of this could be driven to function even better. The authors aim to introduce some of these studies without including all possibilities in connection with their own research.

According to Eurofund's 6th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS6) the quality of workplace can be characterised by 7 factors:

1. physical environment,
2. work intensity,
3. working time quality,
4. social environment,
5. skills and discretion,
6. prospects,
7. ensuring fair pay.

Definition of a family-friendly workplace can be deduced from point 3 and point 4: flexible working time, social and emotional support, workplace safety. The survey data indicate that well-being of employees has strongest correlation with the socio-environmental factor. However skills have an important role to play in prospects and earnings (Eurofund, 2017).

According to Gordon (2015), a family-friendly workplace is the one where company takes into account the private life of employees when creating their timetable and allocating their shifts. In this way, workplace stress can be reduced, there are less absences, productivity increases and the company can be more competitive. Companies can choose from several possibilities (from flexible working hours to company nurseries). Among these, probably the most cost effective is the use of Flexible Workplace Policies (FWPs). This means that employees can choose when, where and how long they would like to work, within the frame of deadlines. Because of this, however, according to numerous researchers, the company's size is key, since a larger company, with more employees, can be more flexible regarding how they manage production than a small business. Simultaneously, Ollier-Malaterre (2009) suggested that since the initial research conducted around this topic had institutional theory as a leading opinion larger companies with many employees and a separate HR section can implement Flexible Working Policy (FWP) effectively. Conversely, small businesses have less flexibility to implement this, due to their financial situation and liquidity.

Other authors believe that the main factor is the demand for standardisation (normative isomorphism) generated by the employers' associations, regarding large companies being more flexible, as they have specialists who could potentially carve out their own path, with the large company backing them (Pohlmann-Dulipovici, 2004).

However, because of their size, small businesses, do not have the capacity to be as flexible regarding organising work and working arrangements. This anomaly was noticed by Davis and Kalleberg in 2006, but no indication was found that could be used as a basis for showing a company's FWP tendency. Therefore, they came to the conclusion that small businesses aimed to echo large businesses when trying to be flexible with their working arrangements.

A company's size not only has an effect on its working arrangements, but in very small businesses, the relationship between the boss and employee is so casual and close that it is much easier to discuss everyday problems and therefore to be flexible, to take into account both parties' interests and to handle the issues. Because of this, small businesses have a competitive advantage with employees who consider flexible working arrangements more important than a larger salary from a large company.

It is especially important to consider the situation of mothers, from pregnancy, through their returning to the job market afterwards, to a child's illness. Regulation overemphasises the employers' role who tend to be afraid of uncertainty and time away arising from women's role as mothers (Kitching, 2013).

The topics of pregnancy and returning to work were examined, using meta-analysis, by Submitz and his colleagues in 2018. According to their results, employers' social relationships with women and other participants (colleagues, family members) make every case unique and there is no general solution. In 2016, Clegg came to the same conclusion. Finally, Whymann (2015) believes that the effects of flexible workplace policies can be seen in three separate areas: firstly, through little fluctuation; secondly, through fewer absences; and thirdly, through a fast-paced movement of money, even in times of recession. Everything mentioned above proves the competitiveness of SMEs.

1 Method

In 2018, the authors conducted a study with the aim of identifying the family-friendly practices of Hungarian organisations. The authors have, in the past ten years, carried out studies regarding this topic, however, in this case, they were interested in the approach that Hungarian companies take with regard to work-life balance, in the light of positive economic developments. 93 Hungarian organisations participated in the research, and they were examined from multiple aspects. The tests were based on a quantitative assessment, in which participants were required to complete an online questionnaire. The samples were collected using snowball sampling. The questionnaire primarily consisted of closed questions, with only one open-ended question being asked. The structure of the questionnaire was the following:

The first set of questions focused entirely on the specification of the sample. Participants were asked to answer questions regarding the organisation's size, location and ownership.

The second set of questions concerned the organisation's workplace culture and how family-friendly the company in question was.

The third set of questions dealt with the organisation of the company and what kinds of possibilities that allowed for. Subsequently, they examined the situation and perspective of employees with a family.

Lastly, the nature of the family-friendly employment and its priority was evaluated, with respect to each participant's own experiences. Single and multivariable statistical methods consisting of one and more variables have been used for the analysis: frequency, average, standard deviation, contingency tables, nonparametric tests, cluster and factor formations.

2 Results

Through the study, multiple hypotheses have been examined. The current report, referencing existing literature and studies, examined the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis:

For the Hungarian organisations that participated in this study, it can be stated that the organisation's size has an effect on its approach to family-oriented employment in 2018.

As stated above, 93 companies from Hungary participated in the survey. From these, 7.5% were microbusinesses (2-4 employees), 16.1% had 9-49 employees, 24.7% were medium-sized enterprises (50-248 employees), and 51.6% were large companies, with 250 or more employees. Data depict that large enterprises are over-represented in the sample, compared to micro and small sized enterprises, which cannot be ignored in the assessment of the results.

61% of the companies being examined were under Hungarian ownership, 22 were under foreign ownership, while 10 companies worked as mixed ownership companies. In addition, those were primarily large enterprises which were under foreign ownership. Here, 31.3% of the companies were not under Hungarian ownership. This percentage was 17.4% for medium-sized enterprises and 20% for small-sized enterprises. All microbusinesses, however, were under Hungarian ownership.

12 participants stated that they were regularly understaffed, while only 5 companies stated that this problem did not occur to them. 33% of businesses chose the intermediary option.

Logically, the companies stated that they expected the maximum from their employees in order to be able to stay competitive. Namely, 38.7% agreed with this statement fully.

It has also been examined what type of autonomy the organisations provide to their employees during the organisation of the work and during the work itself. This could be seen as a basis for employees to be able to balance work with their family commitments. Using a five point Likert scale, participants were asked to assess how relevant a series of statements was to their organisations. Items which were not typical were assigned number one, while number five designated statements that fit entirely. The observations and standard deviations relating to autonomy are summarised in Table 1:

Tab. 1: Observations and standard deviation relating to autonomy

Statements	N		Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
In your organisation, employees have flexibility when selecting the dates they start and finish their work during the day.	93	0	3.02	1.233
In your organisation, employees have opportunity to select non-traditional work schedules (part-time work, telecommuting, etc.).	93	0	2.83	1.324
In your organisation, employees have the option to organise and carry out their work around their schedule within the frame of deadlines.	93	0	3.24	1.314
In your organisation, employees can propose potential improvements to management, regarding organising and scheduling of work and working conditions.	93	0	3.19	1.035
In your organisation, employees have the opportunity to take out a holiday at any point, due to unforeseen circumstances.	93	0	4.01	.878

Source: Self-made table

It can be seen from the answers that employee autonomy is quite inflexible, with regard to work organisation, and atypical working arrangements are also less common. Work organisation generally begins with a decision made higher up in a company, and normally employees have little say in the process. In the study, a question concerning autonomy and work organisation, asked whether there was any difference between the organisations of different size. Micro and small-size businesses were considered a single category in the research, therefore, differences were analysed according to three categories: small, medium and large companies. The ANOVA only showed a significant difference in one case, the results of which are delineated in Table 2:

Tab. 2: ANOVA results (p=0.05)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
In your organisation, employees have the opportunity to take out a holiday at any point, due to unforeseen circumstances.	Between Groups	4.733	2	2.367	3.215	0.045
	Within Groups	66.256	90	0.736		
	Total	70.989	92			

Source: Self-made table

In the specific case of this variable, workers' going on holidays due to unexpected incidents, was found to be more common at large enterprises (average: 4.23) than at small (average: 3.77) or medium-size ones (average: 3.78). Arguably, an explanation for this could be that it is easier to find other employees to cover at organisations where there are more employees than in cases where there are fewer staff available.

Flexible working hours (26.9%), part-time work (23.5%) and teleworking (14.5%) were the most common work schedules or work models for the organisations that took part in the study, alongside full-time employment. The authors analysed whether any significant difference could be identified among these three particular types of working arrangements based on company size, however, none of these cases showed a difference when using a chi-squared test. In other words, organisations employed the above working arrangements, or model types, in a similar proportion.

Participants were also asked to assess, as a whole, the family-friendly solutions that their company implemented. A five point Likert scale was likewise used for decision-making. Not applicable was assigned the number one, while number five corresponded to a statement that was entirely applicable. The results are outlined in Table 3:

Tab. 3: Descriptive Statistics

Characteristics of family-friendly arrangements	N		Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
In your organisation, all employees at all levels are affected by the issue of work-life balance.	93	0	3.41	0.958
In your organisation, the necessary measures for creating work-life balance are applicable to everybody in the organisation.	93	0	3.38	1.021
In your organisation, employees can propose improvements for work-life balance.	93	0	3.08	0.969
In your organisation, the approach to creating work-life balance differs depending on one's position.	93	0	2.49	1.109
In your organisation, the approach to creating work-life balance is based proportionally on how long one has worked for the company.	93	0	2.34	1.068
In your organisation benefits and allowances that can be received to create work-life balance differ, depending on one's position.	93	0	2.57	1.097

In your organisation benefits and allowances that can be received to create work-life balance are based proportionally on how long one has worked for the company.	93	0	2.43	1.107
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Source: Self-made table

The answers reflect that family-friendly techniques and solutions are more typical to be universally applied practises than not. Also, organisations try to prevent family-friendly employment concept from becoming a means of positive discrimination.

For the remaining assessments, the given variable has been reduced to factors. The KMO Bartlett test: 0.677 approx. Chi-squared test: 237.383 df: 105 szign.: .000., the percentage of variance shown: 62.102%. The authors created 2 factors using varimax rotation. The factors were given the following names:

1. Family-friendly policies and solutions apply to everyone in the organisation
2. Family-friendly policies and solutions being used are distinct among employees

With regard to the factors above, the authors examined whether there was a difference between different sized organisations. No difference between companies was found, in the case of the two factors. In addition, universally applicable company policies that applied to everyone were used, similarly to the first case,.

Finally, 77.4% of companies believed that they helped employees coordinate their work-life and family commitments and 91.4% take care of the matters consciously. Therefore, organisations of different sizes did not differ in this domain.

Conclusion

The report examines some of the results obtained from a study being conducted this year. The survey examined organisations from Hungary, with respect to their stance on a family-friendly approach. The 93 participating companies have found not to differ significantly in either the organisational evaluation or the practise of coordinating work-life and family matters as regards company size. A hopeful outcome of the study is the changing attitude of companies in Hungary being examined. They rethink their possibilities in order to help employees solve conflicts between work and family life. A shift in mentality increases competitiveness and improves quality of life.

However, the authors believe that the results should be regarded cautiously due to the small sample size and overrepresentation of large enterprises.

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